



Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 1997 CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Early diagnosis of HIV infection is important because treatment can increase years of healthy life and prevent transmission to others. Zidovudine treatment of pregnant women and their infants can reduce the risk of perinatal transmission from 25% to 8%. Therefore, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all women whose behavior puts them at risk of infection and all pregnant women be offered HIV testing and counseling. Recognizing the importance of making such testing available to all women regardless of their ability to pay, several state and federal programs have been established to provide free or low-cost testing. Prior to the 1997 California Women's Health Survey, little information was available about characteristics of California women being tested for HIV.

During 1997, California women over age 18 were interviewed by telephone, and asked whether they had ever been tested for HIV infection. Those never tested were asked their main reason for never having been tested.

- 41% of respondents had been tested at least once.

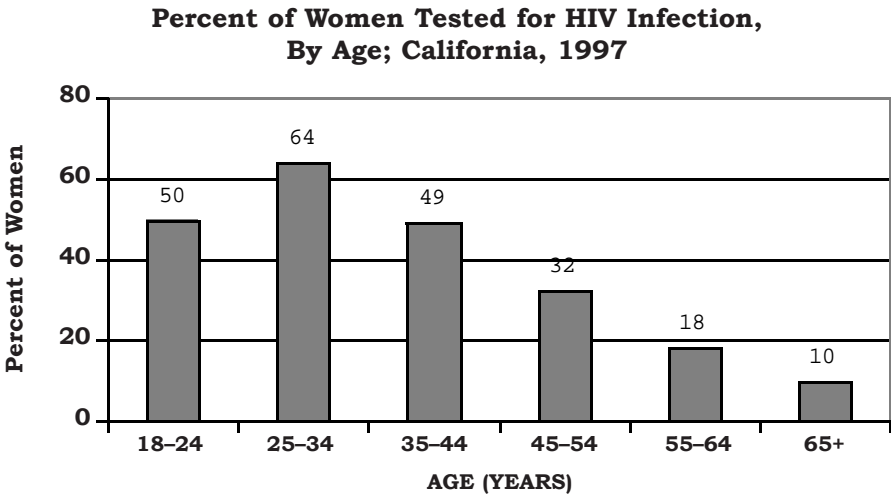
- History of having ever been tested varied by age, race/ethnicity, and type of insurance.
- The proportion of California women who had ever been tested was highest among women age 25-34 (64%) and lowest for women age 65+ (10%).
- Testing rates varied by race/ethnicity: 59% of Blacks, 45% of Latinas, 41% of Asians, and 38% of Whites had been tested.
- Testing history varied by health insurance status: 45% of uninsured women, 45% of those with private insurance, 41% of members of private health maintenance organizations (HMOs), 26% of members of government HMOs, and 26% of those with government insurance had been tested.
- Among women who had never been tested, 89% reported they were not tested because they did not believe they were at high risk for infection. Fewer than 1% of untested women reported not being tested because they were uninsured or were concerned about confidentiality.

CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN WHO HAVE EVER HAD AN HIV TEST; CALIFORNIA, 1997

Office of Women's Health

Public Health Message:

More than half of all women of childbearing age have had an HIV test. The finding that uninsured women are at least as likely as women with health insurance to have received a test suggests that interventions designed to make testing accessible to all women may have been successful at reducing the effect of cost as a barrier to testing.



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